Teen And Up Audiences

Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Gen
M/M

Don't Hug Me I'm Scared (Webseries)

Duck & Red Guy & Yellow Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Duck/Red Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)

Red Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Yellow Guy (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)
Duck (Don't Hug Me I'm Scared)

Families of Choice
Domestic Fluff
canon-typical weirdness
Cooking Lessons
Food as a Metaphor for Love
Red/Duck is there but it's SLOWBURN BABY
Mental Health Issues
Red has PTSD but he doesn't know what that is
Family Fluff
Family Bonding
Father Figures
TW: Graphic depictions of sentient bread slaughter

English ← Previous Work Part 2 of home is where I want to be, but I guess I'm already there Next Work → IM DEALING WITH IT

cooking by the book!

LittleMeowMeowEnjoyer

Summary:

"I don't know if I'm comfortable with him using a knife," Red says, looking up from the newspaper spread across the kitchen table.

"Nobody asked you!" Duck gripes. "I'm the chef here, see? I'm the one with the hat!" He motions up to the toque, which is slightly askew.

"Technically I am also wearing a chef hat." Red jiggles his head at Duck, smugly. "See?"

"Shut up! I wasn't going to give him the knife anyway. *God.*"

Notes:

Hello everyone! I just wanted to start this out by saying I'm so so so touched by the amount of positive feedback my last fic received! I've never in my life had a fandom respond so resoundingly to one of my works, and I've never dreamed of fanart being created based on them 🤷 💖 Honestly, I debated even posting that first fic because I felt it

wasn't good enough, but this experience has honestly re-ignited my interests in writing! So, be on the lookout, I've got a few WIPs going and a lot of ideas for this AU 💘 I may post about them on twitter @swiftiekendall so come say hi!
Edit: New dhmis side twitter is @myshredda!

Duck and Yellow's dynamic is partially based on the TV show and partially based on my own relationship with my Mother! We have the tendency to snip at each other and make a lot of jokes but there's definitely a softness there when it's needed. And so, the softening of Duck begins >:)

EDIT: There's been fanart made of this!!!!!! By one of my absolute favorite artists in this fandom!!!! Tears in my eyes bro I swear to god, I never expected the absolutely wonderful fandom reactions to my work, PLEASE go give this beautiful art some notes!!!!!!
https://www.tumblr.com/carehounds/699550395337506817/put-this-in-my-mental-illness-diagnosis

EDIT 2: Another absolutely amazing piece of art has been made based on this fic like I cannot believe that there are people that are this talented that not only read my fics but make art based on them???? PLEASE go give this a millions notes on tumblr it deserves it 💔
https://www.tumblr.com/bugsinspace/700943817729261568/scene-from-myshreddas-fic-cooking-by-the-book

EDIT 3: More art!!!! It's sooo so cute and beautiful everyone go give it notes!!!
https://www.tumblr.com/chicken-needle-soup/702780176497606656/no-matter-what-we-must-eat-to-live

(See the end of the work for more notes (#work_endnotes) .)

It was later, another day, enough time gone by that Red knew it had to be more than a few days, not that the calendar was any help. A few days devoid of any teachers, strangely enough, even when they were together. It made the house feel static, empty, like the air after a lightning strike. Silently charged with too much energy, and a strong ozone smell. Duck and Yellow didn't seem to notice, or care, about Red's permeating anxiety, or the lack of unwelcome guests.

When Red had tried to mention it to the youngest one, Yellow had simply stared at him, mouth agape. Any of his previous insight had seemingly fizzled out, either that, or Red was better at being subtle than he'd thought. His question of *"isn't it weird that we haven't... **done** anything. In a while?"* had been met with a shrug.

"Well I think it is!" Duck broke in, eyes wide, the way they always were when he had some bright idea.

"Oh?" Red kept his voice even, glancing back and forth between his two…friends. They were friends now, right? Or would family possibly be the better adjective? Or was it a noun? He wasn't very good at grammar. He couldn't remember if they'd gotten a grammar teacher yet, and the thought of it made sweat prickle in what he assumed was his hairline–yarnline? Whatever.

"Yes!" The green one chattered on, ignoring Red's introspection, as always. "I think we should do something."

"Something like what?" Yellow spoke up, swinging his legs under the table. He seemed content, which was nice for a change. At least someone in this house was having an enjoyable time.

"Well, I do believe you owe me some food." Duck raised his brows, flashing a faux-serious look at the yellow one.

"I do?"

"Yes, obviously. Remember my beautiful stew?" He'd taken on a sort of vaguely-Shakespearean dramatics in his tone. One hand raised to rest the back of it against his forehead, as if contemplating a faint.

"I do!" Yellow grins, legs kicking faster. "It was really- very good and very yummy!"

"That's right!" Duck's face softened, clearly touched by the compliments. "The one you and he ate while I was reading!"

"You were asleep," Red mumbled, eyes still flicking around, searching for the tell-tale signs of a teacher's appearance. "And I didn't eat any of it."

"Liar, I was just…resting my eyes!" He was flustered now, cutting a glance to the yellow one as if to check and see if he believed the lie. Yellow just kept swinging his feet, tongue poked out the corner of his mouth. "Anyway, you and I have an overdue cooking lesson!"

"We do?" Yellow stopped kicking, an expression of pure excitement blooming on his face. "Can we wear the, uh, the hats?"

"Of course we can, dummy." Duck smirked, no bite in his tone. "How else would we get any cooking done?"

"Yay!" There was a small commotion as Yellow jumped off his chair, huffing and panting his way to one of the floor cabinets and ripping it open. Body trembling with barely contained excitement, he started throwing bits and bobs out onto the floor. Some Tesco bags, a half-eaten apple that was weeping softly, Duck's wellies, before finally pulling out three folded chef hats with a triumphant shout. "I found 'em!"

"Really?" Duck is smiling again, rather fondly, if you asked Red. Which no one did. "Good show!"

Yellow totters around the table, arms full, white fabric gripped tight against his body. He makes his way to Red first, beaming up at him, eyes shining in excitement.

"I did a good show." He holds out a hat, slightly wrinkled in his tightly held fist. He's bouncing on his heels, the sheer delight of receiving positive feedback radiating off him in waves. It's enough to make Red contemplate screaming into his hands, the little guy is just so *cute*. It's going to give him an ulcer, with the way it makes his stomach flip and twist, surely knotting his entrails up into a big, pulsating mass.

"Very good show," He agrees, casting a glance at Duck. Smug bastard is grinning from ear to ear, and he has the absolute gall to waggle his brows, quite *suggestively.* Annoyed, Red flicks his gaze back to Yellow, ignoring the heat in his cheeks. He extends a hand to take the offered garment, smiling down at the boy. "Thanks."

"Welcome!" He's hurried over to Duck now, an infectious grin still firmly affixed to his face. Arm outstretched, the other hat still held loosely against his chest. "An' here's-here's yours."

"Thank you!" Duck takes both, ignoring the way it makes the yellow one's face drop. Red can't rise to intervene before Duck unfurls one, firmly placing it on Yellow's head. "There, now you're ready."

"I'm ready!" And just like that, the joy is unabashedly back on his face. Honestly, it was like the smaller one had a thousand-watt bulb for a smile, Red almost had to look away again. The shameless sincerity of his undiluted joy was blinding. Yellow turns his attention then to Red, puppy-dog eyes in full effect, all pouting lips and crinkled forehead. "Could you- Can you get my apron? Please?"

"Sure," Red nods, unsurprised by the request. Yellow and Duck had once gotten into a row about whose identical blue-and-white striped apron was whose, and it resulted in Red putting Yellow's in the top of the hall closet, where the green one couldn't reach it. It also meant that, unfortunately, due to their similar heights, Yellow couldn't reach it either. So, the task had fallen to Red to get it down whenever it was needed. He didn't mind much, being the designated tall member of the house, he was used to it. Anyway, the continued lack of teachers had put him in a good mood, his guard finally lowering, making room for an indulgent amusement in his tone. "I supposed I've got to help those less fortunate than I, especially in the height department."

"What's that supposed to mean!" Duck butts in, eyes squinting suspiciously.

"Means you're both short, Mate."

"What- *Wh* -How dare you!" He squawks, offended. His feathers are puffed out, and it makes the yellow one giggle, mouth hidden in his hands. "You hush up! You're not one to talk!"

"You're a shorty," Yellow laughs, the movement of it causing his chef hat to tip down and cover his face.

"No, *you're* a shorty! And you can't even wear your hat right," Duck sniffs, making a 'come here' motion with one hand. "Let me fix it, rude little thing. Here I am wasting my life away over a hot stove, and my thanks? You eat all my food and call me a *shorty*."

Red ignored them both as he pulled Yellow's apron out of the closet, sweeping away the wet dirt and quivering viscera that constantly seemed to leak from the ceiling in there. The two always squabble like this, at least today there wasn't a hateful bite to their words. This place seemed to compound every argument they had, hurt feelings and bruised bodies a normalcy. Or it used to be, he guessed. Something had shifted, the house felt…different somehow, less like a beast ready to pounce. No longer was it gleefully tearing apart its owners over and over again with a sick cheerfulness. Now it was as if it were just *waiting* for something, as if it wanted to see what would happen if it left them alone.

Duck was pulling the yellow one's hat down over his head again, briskly, tugging it this way and that to make sure it fit. Ignoring the whiny protests and loudly exaggerated *'Ow!'*s from Yellow, clucking under his breath about *'cheeky little buggers.'* Red just rolls his eyes. Honestly, they fought over the most insignificant things.

"Here." He says, gently tugging Yellow away from Duck's poking and prodding, walking him a few paces away. "I've got your apron."

"Oh, wow. Thanks!" Yellow gazes up at him, face open, dark eyes sparkling with admiration. There went Red's stomach again. "Help me?"

"Help you put it on?"

"Yeh."

"Okay," Red slips it down over his head, careful not to jostle his hat.

"I can do the strings!" Duck says, joining them by the stove.

"*Alright…*" Yellow looks at him carefully, and is met with an impish smile. "Don't squish me and cut me in two halveses with the strings." He glares a little, like he means to show how serious his threat is. "I mean it."

"Tch!" Duck reaches to boop the yellow one's nose, laughing at the way his face morphs from serious to confused by the touch. "I wouldn't dream of it. Now turn around."

Red watches as the duck one gently pushes Yellow's shoulder, nudging him to face away. True to his word he doesn't wrap the strings too tight, just keeps them comfortably snug, tying them in a bow before spinning the yellow one around to

face him again.

"There! Now you're ready to make a culinary masterpiece." He glances up at Red, as if noticing him for the first time. "And what are you doing? This is a one-on-one session, go find something else to do!"

"Yeah, like- like duck one says," Yellow puts his hands on his hips, mirroring Duck's stance. "We're making a mast of pieces!"

"Fine," Red sniffs, feigning insult. Truthfully, he couldn't remember the last time he was allowed to just sit and do nothing, no offense to his housemates, he didn't really feel like cooking with them. Sometimes, during the most sadistically cruel lessons, as he was sweating blood and vomiting chunks of his own innards, screaming and praying for the release of death, for the day to end and begin anew again, he'd imagine this. This normalcy, an easy domesticity, a simple morning reading the paper while his fre- *family* cooked. Call him greedy, but he's riding this calm out to its fullest, enjoying himself as much as the universe will allow. "I know when I'm not wanted."

"Yeah!" Yellow crows, clearly caught up in the euphoria of partnering up with Duck rather than being picked on, still mimicking the bird's pose with his hands on his hips. Frankly, it's adorable. "You go do something!"

"I am," Red grumbles, ambling into the sitting room to retrieve the newspaper from Duck's chair. Hiding a smile as the other two jabber to each other about what to cook. He's walking back to the table as the conversation seemingly comes to a close, settling down in the yellow-cushioned chair, the best spot to be able to keep one eye on his newspaper and one eye on the duo.

"Now," Duck says, beak high in the air. "We're gonna make *Chicken Legs Coq au Vin!* "

"But I dunno what that is." Yellow frowns, looking at Red for assistance, brows furrowed. Red just shrugs back, equally puzzled. "Please, can we… Can we make, um, bacon butty?"

The sigh that Duck heaves is so heavy, and so filled with a world-weary fatigue it nearly makes Red laugh at the theatrics of it. *Drama queen*, he thought, affectionately.

"I… *suppose* we can make bacon butty, seeing as you're still a novice. I mean I'm basically a gourmet at this point, it makes it easy for me to forget that not everyone is as skilled as I am!"

"Didn't you nearly burn the kitchen down trying to make chips in the oven last week?"

"What is this? *Twenty questions?* Shut up and read your newspaper!" Duck shrieks, glaring at Yellow as he giggles at the older two's squabbling. "Now, I should like to get started before I grow old and gray."

"Too late," Yellow snips, not bothering to hide his tiny grin.

"Don't be cheeky with me!" Duck grouses, reaching out to tweak Yellow's ear. "Rude boys don't get cooking lessons."

"Ah, no!" the youngest one yips, dancing from one foot to the other. "Sorry, I didn't mean it!"

"No pinching," Red intones, not looking up.

"Oh, *whatever*, Mr. Overprotective." He reaches out and touches the side of Yellow's face, cradling it for a moment and rubbing his thumb soothingly against his soft cheek. "There, all better. Right?"

"Uh, right." Yellow says, eyes like saucers, staring at Duck in wonder. "I liked that."

"You did?" Duck starts, embarrassed to have been caught in the act of doing something nice for someone else. "That's, uh, that's great. I guess I can do…that more. If you want?"

"Uh-huh." Yellow says, in a tone that Red knows from experience means he's going to bring this back up later. "Can we make the bacon buttys now?"

"Yes. Right! The mysterious bacon butty! First we start with the bread, okay?"

"Okay!"

Red listens passively to their conversation, as Duck bluffs about his apparent knowledge of the history of bacon buttys, allegedly created by Caravaggio in 1875, during a wild euchre game played with Julia Childs, who knew? A high pitched screaming filled the kitchen as Duck pulled the loaf out the bread box, begging for mercy and cursing god in the same breath, all very standard kitchen stuff. He turned his attention to the window, confused by the warmth of the light filtering in. Hadn't it been morning? This was golden-hour sunlight. Ah well, it certainly helped with the cozy atmosphere.

"Now!" Duck said loudly, over the gurgling death rattle of the halved loaf. "We cut this big piece into several smaller slices. Enough for everyone, okay?"

"I don't know if I'm comfortable with him using a knife," Red says, looking up from the newspaper spread across the kitchen table.

"Nobody asked you!" Duck gripes. "I'm the chef here, see? I'm the one with the hat!" He motions up to the toque, which is slightly askew.

"Technically I am also wearing a chef hat." Red jiggles his head at Duck, smugly. *"See?"*

"Shut up! I wasn't going to give him the knife anyway. *God* ." Duck starts slicing the bread loaf, talking loud enough to be heard over the guttural moans leaking from its twisted mouth. Carefully handing Yellow every slice so he could put

them on a plate. “There, enough for all of us to have some. That’s important, okay? Good chefs remember to make enough food, or else you’ll have to kill the extra guest. Do it cleanly, so as to not upset the rest of the party. *Remember that!* ”

“R-right! I’ll remember.”

Red snorts, flipping to the next page of his paper. He wasn’t Mr. Overprotective, was he? *Nah* , Duck was probably exaggerating. He just wanted to make sure that he kept the two of them within eyesight at all times, to be able to eliminate any potential threats that could arise. And if he took his eyes off them for a singular second some sort of horrifically gory, potentially deadly occurrence would take place, and it would be entirely his fault for losing focus. That was a completely logical thought process of a totally normal guy, no mental issues or lingering trauma here. Red took a plum out of the fruit bowl, chewing it thoughtfully, veiny blue innards and white flecks of grizzle catching in his yarn. He brushed them away. Yes, he decided, totally normal.

The duo had moved on to frying bacon at that point, Yellow carefully peeling the pink flesh and pale fat loose from the package, handing it to Duck to put into the hot pan. It was cute, the way they were working in tandem, despite their constant, annoyingly harmless, bickering. Bickering over who was going to work the tongs (Duck), bickering over who got to separate the kitchen roll squares to catch grease (Yellow), bickering over who was to butter the bread (Yellow, by a slight margin). Along with the constant, anguished lowing of the bread, and the crackling sizzle of bacon fat, the kitchen was filled with the sounds and smells of life. Honestly, one could grow used to this.

“Okay,” Duck said, “We’ve assembled the butty…. And now…” he paused, theatrically. Clearly preening under Yellow’s undivided, attentive awe. “We’re to fry it!”

Red chuffed a laugh as Yellow clapped excitedly, as if Duck had performed some sort of magic trick, instead of just saying instructions out-loud in a faltered speech pattern.

“You let one side cook until crisp- *don’t touch that it’s hot* - and flip it, with the flipper.”

“Ooh ooh ooh! Lemme flip it, lemme flip it!” Yellow bounces on his heels, making grabby hands at Duck.

“*Fine,*” Duck sighs, handing the spatula to the younger one. He waits a moment, watching Yellow as he just stands there, holding it. “*Well?* ”

“Dunno how to flip, can you help?”

“I thought you said you wanted to do it!”

“I do!” Yellow whines, “Just help me.”

“Alright, *alright!* ” Duck moans, gently prodding Yellow to stand in front of him at the stove, enclosing his right hand around Yellow’s own. “Here just like this. Honestly, it’s not that hard. It’s all in the wrist.”

“I’m sure you’ve said that before,” Red injects from the table, leaning back in his chair with both hands behind his head.

“Shut it!” Duck squeals, flustered. “Now on the count of three, okay?”

“Okay.” Yellow says, completely serious, intently watching the butty.

“One…Two… *Three!* ”

The sandwich flips unceremoniously, sizzling as it lands.

“YES!” Yellow screams, startling the other two. *“WE DID IT!”*

“AhHfg- *OW.”* Duck gurgles, *“* My *EARDRUMS.* ”

“Sorry,” the youngest one blushes, dipping his head down. “I got excited.”

“We could tell,” Red grumbles, vigorously jabbing his finger in his ear canal, as if to lessen the ringing.

“Well, now that I’m deaf, we can just wait until the other side is done. And you’ve got the mythical bacon betty!” Duck is letting Yellow scoot the sandwich around in the pan with the spatula, his hand finally removed from the younger’s. “Now, your first sandwich is special, it can either be eaten by you, or a member of your party. But remember: Good chefs eat last.”

“Good chef eats last.” Yellow repeats, eyes locked on the pan. “I think it’s done now.”

“Do you want me to get it out for you?”

“Yeh.”

Duck complies, flipping the sandwich up and out onto the plate that Yellow is gripping with two hands. He pats it twice with the spatula, matter-of-factly.

“There, your first sandwich.”

Yellow looks down at it, a pleased expression looping across his face. He stands another moment, before turning to pad up to the table, smiling at Duck briefly before he does so.

Red looks up from his paper, greeted by the sight of Yellow, hat cooked, still gripping the plate in both hands.

“Hello,” He smiles, eyes lidded, like a sentimental old fool. “What have you got there?”

“Hell-llo!” Yellow says, in that sing-song way he does. “I’ve got, I’ve made, a *bacon butty*. For you.”

“What? you’ve- Oh! But, that’s the first one you’ve made. Don’t you want to eat first?”

"Uh- *UH* !" Yellow grins, looking immensely proud of himself as he shakes his head. He places the plate on the table and slides it to Red slowly, with the utmost care. "This one's for you, I made it special. 'Cause the first one is the most-special. Duck said."

Red can only sit there, staring at the lopsided sandwich. It's a little burnt, and there's not really enough bacon, and the bread is still semi-conscious, hallucinating nonsense as its end crawls near. All in all, it's an okay sandwich. Yet, Red is so deeply moved by the thoughtfulness of the gesture he's nearly too touched to speak. He's been given the first sandwich of the meal, possibly the first sandwich Yellow's ever made, one can't fault him for the way his eyes mist. Not even Duck.

"Th-thank you," Red sets his hand on the top of Yellow's head, flattening his toque, leaving its warm weight to rest there solidly for a moment. "It's the most beautiful sandwich I've had the pleasure of eating."

"Yay!" Yellow crows, bringing both hands up to hold onto Red's own, eyes covered by his collapsed hat. "Next one is for the other one 'nd then me. Chefs eat last."

Red looks up at Duck, who's been quietly watching the interaction as he butters the next slices of bread. There's a look of fondness on the avian's face, one that Red is sure is mirrored back in his own. He catches the green one's gaze in his, quirking his brows. Duck simply raises his back, nodding down to the yellow one. Red gets it, the innocent cheerfulness is infectious.

"I think I need my sous-chef back here, please." Duck says, voice mellow.

Yellow doesn't move, happy to stand and hold Red's large hand in his grasp.

"That's you," Red says, finally, realizing the smaller one probably doesn't know what a sous is.

"Aw yeah, okay!" He squeezes Red's wrist tightly for a moment, before letting it go, waiting for the red one to remove his hand before trotting back to the stove. Red places the same hand on his chest a moment, having to remember how his lungs worked, and where exactly they were located internally. He thinks in the middle area, but he's not really sure.

He continues to stare at the sandwich as Yellow and Duck finish up the final two, eyes roaming over its imperfect form. He's never felt like this before, over anything, not that he can remember. It's almost as if he's died, after spending so many years in this purgatory, and ascended into a cosmic space of happiness and ease. How long has he gone without being in some kind of mental or physical anguish, he wonders. *At some point we **will** have an accident*, he thinks, vaguely, the phrase half-remembered as if from another time, another life. But there weren't any accidents today, or the past few. In all honesty he's been quite…happy.

He gives a start at the sound of dishware being set on the table, looking up to see Duck placing plated sandwiches down at his and Yellow's respective seats.

"Aren't you going to eat that?" He says, tugging Yellow's hat off his head and then removing his own. "It's probably cold now."

"Uh, uhm…" Red flounders, not wanting to admit he'd lost time while in thought. He swiftly removes his own hat, embarrassed to still be wearing it. "I wanted to wait. And-and eat with you both. If that's alright."

"Of course it's alright!" The other two had removed their aprons at some point and hung them on the coat hooks, as far apart as possible. Duck is giving him an odd look, like he's said something in a funny foreign language, or worse, an American accent. "Why wouldn't it be?"

"I don't…I don't know. Let's just eat okay."

"Yeah," Yellow says, settling himself in the middle chair. His legs are swinging again, a self-satisfied look of pride on his face. "We'll eat together. It's the best way."

They dig in after that, without saying anything more. There wasn't anything else they could say, really. Yellow had got it in one, it really was best together.

Red bit into his delicately, savoring the crunch of toasted bread and bacon grease. It was pretty good actually. Really good.

They eat quietly, but it's a comfortable silence, in the warm, golden light of the seemingly eternal afternoon. Red laughs as Yellow nicks a piece of Duck's bacon, one that had fallen out of his overflowing sandwich. Laughs as Duck splutters and shrieks about it, as Yellow chews exaggeratedly, open-mouthed at Duck. Laughs until tears sting the corners of his eyes and a lump rises in his throat, small and sore. He didn't think his body was even capable of doing this, this happiness… *thing.* It hurt a little, but it was a good hurt.

Yellow's eyes start to droop as he finishes his sandwich, legs swinging slower. Wordlessly, he hands Duck his crusts, an apparent peace offering for the snitched bacon from earlier. The green one just takes them, popping them into his mouth and leaning in to chew noisily in Yellow's ear.

"Augh," Yellow bats him away, *"Gross!"*

"You're gross," he snips back, easily. "Give me your plate if you're done. I'll put it in the sink with mine."

"Here, I'm done too." Red says, through his last mouthful. "Let me do the dishes."

"Okay," Duck slides the empty plates over to the tallest one, confused. "Why?"

"'Cause you lot cooked," He stands, pushing his chair back in. "I can at least do the dishes."

Duck stands too, shrugging. "Well, that was an awfully good meal I think."

"Yeah," Red says, smiling down at Yellow. "It was delicious."

Yellow responds by hugging Red around the middle, the highest point he can reach, and burrowing his face into the older one's stomach. Squealing out a quick *'thank you!'* before releasing him, moving faster than Red's brain can respond to. He moves onto Duck then, wrapping himself around the similarly statured bird and burying his face in his shoulder.

Duck looks flabbergasted, body ramrod straight, arms hovering above Yellow's body like he was to be shocked by electricity if he touched him. He gives Red a pleading look, rendered speechless for the first time the taller one can remember.

'Hug him back,' Red pantomimes, wrapping his arms around the air, body shaking with silent laughter.

Duck glares at him, but complies. Awkwardly patting Yellow on the back for a moment, before letting himself fully embrace the boy, head tipped against the younger one's, arms pressing him close.

"Thanks," Yellow says into his shoulder, nuzzling at it a bit. "For helping, 'nd for teaching me to be a good chef."

"You're very welcome," Duck says, his voice crackly. Red decides not to mention it, something about pots and kettles coming to mind.

Yellow pulls back, face split by a grin. "I think that I- I should be the head chef. Next time!"

"No way!" Duck huffs, ruffling his hair and gently shoving his head away. There's a laugh in his voice that Red wouldn't have noticed before, it sounds kind of nice. "I'll always be the head chef, you muppet."

"If the other one's gonna do dishes can I go watch TV?" Yellow begs, worrying his lower lip with his teeth.

"Fine," Red says, "You can go watch TV while I wash. Or did you want to help dry?"

"I can do it," Duck cuts in. "I can dry."

"Well, you're certainly being helpful today."

"I am not!" Duck spat, as if insulted. "He-he just throws the plates away, you know that. I quite like these, and I prefer them whole."

"Can I go watch TV now?" Yellow says in a whine, tugging on Red's arm.

"Okay," Red agrees, calling after him as he scampers to the sitting room. "Anything on HBO has to be 12A or below, I mean it!"

He ignores the drawn out *'awwwwwwwww'* that drifts from the other room, turning to stop up the sink.

"He's just going to watch *Rainbow Fish*, you know that." Duck grumbles, binning the greasy kitchen roll squares and the empty bacon packet.

"I know," Red says, wiping down the counter. "But sometimes he likes to scroll around and pick based on the cover, not the rating."

Duck harrumphs, handing the taller one the dirty pan. He looks thoughtful, scowling to himself as he attempts to sit up on the counter, towel in hand.

"Hey, let me help," Red says, wrapping his hands around Duck's hips and depositing him on the counter before he could even think twice about it. His face burns, why on earth had he done that?

Duck sits there, brows high, almost smiling. He doesn't say anything, just watches Red as he busies himself filling the sink with hot water. Watches as Red fumbles with the soap, feeling as though his whole head was alight, watches as he swishes the water around to get the bubbles going, body hunched in embarrassment. Wordlessly holding his hand out for each wet dish, gently rubbing them down and stacking them beside him on the counter.

"Do you think he liked it?" Duck says finally, staring down at the plate in his hands, half enveloped by the towel. "Cooking, I mean."

"I should say so," Red glanced up, the heat in his face finally lessened. "I think he had a lot of fun, actually."

"Oh, well, that's good." He's thinking again, drying and re-drying the dish in his hands.

"Why?" Red says carefully, keeping his voice neutral. "Were you trying to impress him?"

"Wh-what? No! Why should I care if he's impressed with me? He's an idiot, I don't care what he thinks!" Duck stutters, looking away. Suddenly he looks back, eyes sharp. "*Why*? Do you think he was impressed?"

"He was looking at you like you personally invented bread, I think he was impressed." Red smiles softly, eyes tender, nerves alight in embarrassment over his obvious sappiness. "Besides, he did hug you, that counts for something. Right?"

"He hugged you too, you know," Duck mumbles. "Hurry up with that will you? I'd like to be done before the next millennia."

"I'm not the one that's been drying the same plate for an hour, Mate."

Their quiet talking is interrupted by Yellow's laughter, drifting out from the sitting room. Duck looks up, expression far-away for a moment.

"Something's different with him lately." He says, placing the final plate on the stack. "He's been almost…"

“Cute?”

“Yes, exactly. He’s been *cute.* It’s really weird.”

“Yeah,” Red laughs, “It’s really, really weird.”

“You’ve been different too.”

“Have I?”

“Well I’ve never gotten a boost up to the counter before.”

“I- You- Oh, shut up.” Red groans, unstopping the sink and wiping his hands on Duck’s towel.

“No, I mean it, I like this newer you! Maybe you can start pulling my chair out for me too, you gentleman, you.”

“Shut *uuuuup*," He buries his face in his hands, mortified. “I don’t know why I did that. I won’t do it again, I’m sorry.”

“I didn’t say that!” Duck says, teasingly. Hopping down off the counter. “I kind of…liked it.”

“Really?” Red peeks out from behind his hands.

“Really.” Duck smiles up at him, genuine. It makes Red’s heart give a wince. Stupid organ. “Let’s go watch *Rainbow Fish,* eh?”

“Yeah, you go ahead, I’ll be right there.”

Red watches Duck leave, the kitchen filled only with the sound of the ticking clock. His body feels warm, and strange, like there was something fluttering inside him. He picks up the discarded dish towel and screams into it, only for a moment. Just long enough for the overwhelming feelings in his brain to settle down.

The Red one pads into the sitting room, ready now to watch TV with the other two. Content just to spend as much time as possible with them.

Behind him, in the kitchen window, unseen, the sun slowly creeps higher into the sky. Back to its proper position for the time of day, unnoticed by the occupants of the little pink house.

Notes:

This fic had me googling British children’s food and one of the lists had BAKED BEAN PIZZA on it like someone save those kids omg… Anyway, Yellow was originally going to ask to make PB&J but British people apparently don’t eat them??? Hell country, truly.

Title is from LazyTown! My very own terrifying puppet show from childhood that feels like a fever dream when I think back on it 💔

Btw Yellow’s tendency to kick when excited is inspired by me! Because I do that!! Autism recognizes autism LOL

Also! This is probably the best place to link my DHMIS playlist I made on Spotify! Enjoy: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2XXVH0TSpNho9zyV1wNkHF?si=0a7d275511ca46b2

Series this work belongs to:

- ← Previous Work (http://archiveofourown.org/works/42385179) Part 2 of home is where I want to be, but I guess I'm already there (http://archiveofourown.org/series/3179772) Next Work → (http://archiveofourown.org/works/42709320)

Close (#)